Reflection  
Our Sixth Principle:  
The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all

When I think of our Sixth Principle, my mind immediately turns to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948 as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. It was the result of the experience of the Second World War. With the end of that war, and the creation of the United Nations, the international community vowed never again to allow atrocities like those of that conflict happen again. World leaders decided to complement the United Nations Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere. Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the drafting committee.

I will share some of the articles of this amazing document with you, and urge you to look it up, read it yourself and share it with your children. The Universal declaration of Human Rights says that everyone has the
right to life, liberty, and security of person, it outlaws slavery and torture, says that all are entitled to equal protection under the law of any country, a fair trial, may not be detained arbitrarily, that every person has the right to freedom of movement in any state and between countries, the right to own property, the right to an education and to benefit from his or her labor. There is much more. Here is the link:

I can assure you that if Eleanor Roosevelt could see our world today, she would turn over in her grave at the violence, wars, killing, and aggressive behaviors at all levels of most societies.

I vacillate between feeling angry and feeling helpless. Sometimes when watching or reading the news I feel like throwing up my hands in despair.

What are the causes of all the violence and turbulence? Poverty? Overpopulation? Greed? Ambition for power to control others? Fear of being controlled by others? Economic concerns? Tribal competition?
Territorial ambition? Competition for necessities of life such as food and water? Differences in belief systems and values?

I leave it to scholars and people smarter than I am to figure out the causes. What I want to know is how to make a difference in preventing war and making peace. Of course, it doesn’t make a lot of sense to look for a cure without knowing the cause. Yet the need to do something, even if it is wrong, steadily presses upon me.

Where to start? What to do? How can I help? What can any of us do that will make a difference? What a quandary!

Well, there’s a lot we can do, and on many levels. And we need to get busy because the forces of evil and violence are alive and well!

Every Saturday morning the Gilford Peace Alliance, including several of our members, stands on the corner across from Page’s Hardware on the Guilford Green with their banners. Sometimes there are organized marches and demonstrations to join to support or protest about other issues. Our friends from the New London congregation are walking from New London to Newtown
and back to honor the victims of the Newtown shootings, and to make a statement for peace and against gun violence. We will host them Tuesday night and they will talk to us about their concerns. Come at 6:00 PM, bring a dish, and meet these brave Unitarian Universalists from up the road.

Another way to sound your voice for peace and a better world is by participating in the campaigns and petitions sponsored by MoveOn and Change.Org. Their petitions to lawmakers and decision makers gather thousands of signatures, numbers that are difficult for elected officials to ignore. You can pick and choose your issues. This way of voicing your opinions takes very little time and effort.

Of course, we can always write real letters and call our elected representatives at the city, state and national levels. Visits are even better.

Ever write a letter to the editor? Or an op-ed opinion piece? This is a good thing to do, and always check with the publication ahead of time for their the rules and specifications for submissions. You don’t want to go to all that trouble and have your piece rejected because it is 20
Volunteering with advocacy groups is great experience and often fun, and you meet fabulous people, people who care and want to make a difference, just like you.

It can be challenging to find the best way to communicate and pursue a cause that moves us. To avoid feeling like a drop in the bucket, we can join with others, in interfaith organizations to gain leverage. I like to support the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice, and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Make a contribution and they do most of the harder work. And speaking of contributions, I want to thank all of you who contribute to the Relief Fund for Nepal last week. You gave $528, the largest Outreach Offering ever collected here. That money will go a long way too help with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee’s work to heal the wounds of those massive earthquakes and landslides, where over 8,000 people have died, and countless homes were destroyed.

Strangely enough, all these ways of working to achieve peace and harmony, seem to be simpler and
easier when they involve distance, like sending money, or writing letters, or signing petitions. Building community is more complicated the closer it gets to home. Wise people in ancient days came up with the idea of covenant, promises between people, to spell out mutual obligations and behaviors to frame interactions so that all parties understood mutual expectations and ground rules for amicable and civil behavior. We worked all last fall to come to agreement on a congregational covenant, and you can find it printed in your bulletin.

The most difficult place to achieve peace and justice is sometimes right at home. Difference of opinion, power struggles, conflicts can easily get out of hand and turn vicious among families and loved ones. It doesn’t do much good to work for “peace” and justice in the world if we can’t achieve it at home, or here in our faith community. Home and right here are where it all begins, where peace and love are created, take form and take off.

So, our Sixth Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all needs to begin right at home among those we love, and in our small beloved community right here. How can we expect to build world
peace if we can’t create peace around our own dinner tables, and right here? The way to create peace, liberty and justice for all out there is to model peace, liberty and justice right here. Right here in our hearts. And so I leave that challenge with you – to sort out differences, build love by living in covenant. We need to start some place, and that place is home.

Amen